



## Opportunity Agendas

Governor Andrew Cuomo described the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) Opportunity Agendas in his 2013 written State of the State message. This innovative new program empowers the Regional Councils to build on their success by targeting resources and expertise to help overcome the challenges that prevent poor communities from fully participating in our state's economic revitalization.

The Regional Councils have redefined the way New York invests in jobs and economic growth by putting in place a community-based, bottom-up approach. Through the Opportunity Agenda initiative, the Regional Councils can use that same approach to address the challenges of concentrated poverty and ensure that inequality does not hamper growth.

This program asks each Regional Council to identify one Opportunity Area, a chronically distressed community whose revitalization will not only support residents but also foster economic growth more broadly. After selecting an Opportunity Area, each Regional Council is asked to draft an Opportunity Agenda that details the Regional Council's plans for further linking its Opportunity Area to the region's economic development strategies. Each Opportunity Agenda will create a pilot program to ensure members of the Opportunity Area have the tools they need to overcome barriers to entry in the workforce. This way, individuals who struggle to find or hold a job because of child-care responsibilities, a prior criminal record, a lack of training, or an unstable housing situation, will become part of our economic revitalization.

The State will support the Opportunity Agendas by expanding the expertise available to Regional Councils through the State Agency Resource Team (SART), expanding the universe of resources available through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to entities implementing programs consistent with the Opportunity Agendas, and focusing state programs and outreach on the Opportunity Areas that the Regional Councils identify as strategically important.

With this support, each Regional Council can create an innovative program for inclusive economic development. Working together with stakeholders, experts, education leaders, and the business community, the Regional Councils are uniquely positioned to develop and implement these programs, and they are invited to develop creative, bottom-up Opportunity Agendas that will give all New Yorkers a chance to prosper.

### **Supporting the Opportunity Agendas:**

The Governor is seeking input now from the Regional Councils on the structure and CFA resources of the Opportunity Agenda. Programs being considered are those focused on:

#### Workforce Development:

- OTDA SNAP Venture program supports education and training for recipients of SNAP benefits – services range from basic literacy to vocational skills training
- NYSERDA workforce development programs train workers to install solar panels, and install and maintain electric vehicle charging stations



- DOL workforce development programs, including WIA and NY Youth Works

Technical Assistance:

- Variety of programs to help ensure that Opportunity areas are able to leverage funding opportunities provided through the CFA. We are looking to revitalize communities by financing a variety of projects and services to enhance economic growth and development, create new jobs, and increase the quality of life.
- Programs being considered are:
  - Up to \$100,000 in resources to each Opportunity Area through the CFA in support of transportation, child care, and other programs that would not be eligible for support from other sources;
  - AmeriCorps Funding
  - Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) provides funds to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities
  - Minority and Women-Owned business lending efforts.
  - Expand State Agency Resource Team (SART) to include staff with expertise in newly added grant programs, and expertise in social service delivery

Education:

- College Access Challenge Grants aim to increase the number of low-income students prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education
- Early College High School Grants – we are working to strategically place ECHSs in or near Opportunity Areas

Community Development:

- Urban and Community Development grants encourage the creation of economic and employment opportunities in distressed communities